



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

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FOUR INMATES INDICTED FOR PRISON OFFENSES
AT COLEMAN FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL COMPLEX

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez and William R. Falls, Special Agent in Charge of the Jacksonville Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, announced today that four inmates at the Federal Correctional Complex in Coleman, Sumter County, Florida, have been indicted on various charges. One inmate was indicted for escape, two were indicted for assaulting correctional officers and employees, and one was indicted for assaulting another inmate.

MELINDA TOLBERT, age 30, of Webster, Florida, was indicted on one count of escape. The maximum penalty for escape is five years' imprisonment. According to the indictment, Tolbert escaped from the FCC Coleman women's camp on November 29, 2002, after having been incarcerated for the offense of conspiracy to distribute cocaine base, or "crack" cocaine. Tolbert was convicted of the conspiracy in federal court in Ocala, and on October 29, 2002, she was sentenced to 38 months in prison. After her escape, Tolbert

was located in Webster on the evening of December 3, 2002, but fled into a wooded area after spotting the approach of law enforcement. A search of the area, with the assistance of helicopters and canine units, was conducted during the night but was unsuccessful. However, Tolbert was apprehended when she emerged from the woods the following morning, December 4, 2002.

CHARLES BENDER, age 28, of Washington, D.C., was indicted on fifteen counts of assaulting federal officers and employees. The maximum penalty for each assault count is eight years' imprisonment, however, in one count he faces 20 years' imprisonment because the victim suffered bodily injury. According to the indictment, Bender committed fifteen assaults on thirteen different FCC Coleman employees in the one-year period between April 11, 2002, and April 13, 2003. Most of the victims were correctional officers. Several of the alleged assaults consisted of the throwing of a fluid at the victims. Three incidents involved spitting at the victims and in two incidents the victims were allegedly struck by Bender. Bender is serving a sentence of 121 months in the United States Penitentiary, the maximum security facility at FCC Coleman, after being convicted of the offense of conspiracy to participate in a racketeer influenced corrupt organization.

KEITH GALE, age 40, of Miami, Florida, was indicted on one count of assaulting a federal officer. The maximum penalty is 20 years' imprisonment because the victim suffered bodily injury. According to the indictment, on May 29, 2002, Gale assaulted a correctional officer with a chair at the United States Penitentiary. Gale is serving a sentence of 270 months after being convicted of the offense of possession and use of a firearm by a convicted felon in relation to a crime.

ALBERT RUIZ, age 35, of Detroit, Michigan, was indicted on one count of assaulting another inmate. The maximum penalty is ten years' imprisonment. According to the indictment, on August 19, 2002, Ruiz assaulted the inmate with a razor blade, causing serious bodily injury. Ruiz is serving a sentence of 300 months after being convicted of the offense of conspiracy to participate in a racketeer influenced corrupt organization.

Each of these cases was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Ocala. The FBI was assisted by the Special Investigative Section at FCC Coleman. The Tolbert escape was also investigated by the United States Marshals Service, and the FBI and the Marshals Service were assisted in apprehending Tolbert by the Sumter County Sheriff's Office and the Webster Police Department. The prosecutor for each case is Assistant United States Attorney Arnold B. Corsmeier, who works in the Jacksonville division of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

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